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2 April 2008

### CMR102788.E

Cameroon: The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL); organizational structures; leaders; activities; membership cards; treatment of their members by government authorities  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### The Southern Cameroons National Council

Established in the early 1990s in Cameroon, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) is an Anglophone separatist organization (*Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World* 2004, 58; *PHW* 2007 2007, 203; *Europa* 2007 2007, 1066). The SCNC advocates the secession of the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest provinces from the mostly French-speaking remainder of Cameroon (*Upstream* 16 June 2006; Reuters 3 Jan. 2004). The group has been outlawed by the Cameroonian government (US 11 Mar. 2008; Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008; UN 19 Feb. 2007; Freedom House 2007).

On 25 February 2008, the Research Directorate conducted a telephone interview with a sociologist at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, Netherlands, who has published research on the situation of Anglophones in Cameroon. According to the Sociologist, between 1995 and 1996, several factions of the SCNC were formed (25 Feb. 2008). The Sociologist said that he was aware of "at least" three factions of the group, but that there could now be more (25 Feb. 2008). He also noted that each faction of the SCNC has its own top leaders, as well as regional and local leaders (Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008). Other sources indicate that the SCNC has branches outside of Cameroon (*The Post* 24 Jan. 2008; *ibid.* 25 Jan. 2008).

Cited in a 14 January 2007 article in the Buea-based newspaper *The Post*, a leader of one of the SCNC factions indicated that there were several SCNC factions and "many other splinter groups" with the same cause. He identified four factions: one led by [Frederick Alobwede] Ebong; one led by Nfor Ngala Nfor and Ayamba [Ette Otun]; one led by [Henry] Fossung; and one led by Ebenezer Akwanga called the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) (*The Post* 14 Jan. 2007).

Sources consulted by the Research Directorate identify several SCNC leaders, but generally do not indicate to which faction they belong. The leaders identified in the sources are:

- Nfor Ngala Nfor, National Vice Chairman (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2.b; OMCT 8

Mar. 2007; *The Post* 24 Jan. 2008; *PHW 2007* 2007, 203)

- Frederick Alobwede Ebong, Chairman (*PHW 2007* 2007, 203) and President of the self-declared Federal Republic of the Southern Cameroons (*PHW 2007* 2007, 203; *Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World* 2004, 58)

- Charles Mbide, Vice National Secretary [Ebong faction] (*The Post* 14 Jan. 2007)

- Henry Fossung, leader of a faction opposed to the independence declaration by the Ebong faction (*PHW 2007* 2007, 203)

- Ayamba Ette Otun, National Chairman (*The Post* 21 Sept. 2007; *ibid.* 30 Jan. 2007b)

- Andrew Azong-Ware, Secretary General (*PHW 2007* 2007, 203)

- Stephen Kongnso, County Chair, Bui (*ibid.*; *The Post* 11 Oct. 2007)

- Henry Lamnyam, County Secretary, Donga Mantung (OMCT 8 Mar. 2007)

- Achu Njei David, Organizing Secretary, Mezam County (*ibid.*)

- Nguemo Clement, Financial Secretary, Santa (*ibid.*)

- Mbi Ann-Rita Eyong, Vice Chair, Kumba (*ibid.*)

- Ngiewih Asunkwan, National Communication Officer (*ibid.*; *The Post* 21 Feb. 2008)

- Hitler Mbinglo, Northern Zone Chairman (*ibid.* 17 Feb. 2008)

- James Sabum, National Organizing Secretary (*ibid.* 3 Apr. 2006)

- Sylvester Taku, Southern Zone Chairman (*ibid.* 30 Jan. 2007a)

- Anderson Ebai, Chairman for Fako County (*ibid.*)

- Thomas Acha, Chairman for Meme County (*ibid.*)

- Mathias Esambi, Chairman for Ndian County (*ibid.*)

- Nso Tabong, Chairman for Manyu County (*ibid.*)

- Joseph Mbekunjang, Chairman for Lebialem County (*ibid.*)

- Henry Forsung Fondeck, Chairman for Kupe Muanenguba County (*ibid.*)

The SCNC's motto is reportedly "the force of argument and not argument of

force" (*The Post* 25 Jan. 2008; *ibid.* 30 Jan. 2007b). According to the Sociologist at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, much of the SCNC's activities are at the international level (25 Feb. 2008). For example, the group has regularly brought their cause for independence before the United Nations (UN) and the Unrepresented Nations and People's Organization (UNPO) [a non-governmental organization whose members "are indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognised or occupied territories who have joined together to protect and promote their human and cultural rights, to preserve their environments, and to find non-violent solutions to conflicts which affect them" (UNPO n.d.)] (Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008; *The Post* 3 Oct. 2006; see also UN 19 Feb. 2007). The SCNC also reportedly has an active presence on the Internet (Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008).

According to a 2004 Reuters article, the SCNC "have been broadly tolerated [in Cameroon] for nearly a decade, although there have been periodic bouts of arrest" (3 Jan. 2004). Several sources consulted indicate that the Cameroonian authorities "routinely" disrupt SCNC meetings (Freedom House 2007; Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008; US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2.b) and demonstrations (*ibid.*; UN 19 Feb. 2007). On 20 January 2007, approximately 20 SCNC members and leaders, including National Vice Chairman Nfor Ngala Nfor, were arrested at a press conference held by the group in Bamenda, Southern Cameroons (OMCT 8 Mar. 2007; UNPO 6 Feb. 2007). Security forces are said to have used "excessive force" in the arrests (*ibid.*; OMCT 8 Mar. 2007; *The Post* 30 Jan. 2007b). While some of the arrested individuals were released within a few days, others were reportedly detained for close to two months without being formally charged with a crime (OMCT 8 Mar. 2007; see also UNPO 8 Mar. 2007). The remaining detainees were apparently released in mid-March 2007 on 2000 US dollars bail each (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2.b).

*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007* indicates that in 2007, Cameroonian security forces "pre-emptively" arrested a number of leaders, members and supporters of the SCNC to prevent them from attending the group's "unauthorized" meetings (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2.b). Sources indicate that during the year, Cameroonian authorities kept SCNC members under surveillance (US Sec. 1.f; UNPO 8 Mar. 2007; *ibid.* 30 Jan. 2007; *The Post* 13 Aug. 2007), and engaged in what an SCNC official described as "intimidation, harassment and threats" (*ibid.*). At the beginning of 2008, *The Post* reported on further arrests of leaders and members of the SCNC (*The Post* 21 Feb. 2008; *ibid.* 17 Feb. 2008; *ibid.* 24 Jan. 2008).

According to the Sociologist at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the Cameroonian authorities tend to disrupt SCNC meetings and arrest members particularly around the group's "Independence Day" on 1 October (25 Feb. 2008). In the period leading up to the SCNC Independence Day in 2007, there were reports of SCNC members being arrested (*The Post* 13 Aug. 2007; *ibid.* 11 Oct. 2007; *ibid.* 21 Sept. 2007; US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2.b), as well as "harassed" and threatened by the Cameroonian authorities (*The Post* 13 Aug. 2007). According to an article in *The Post*, 1 October celebrations "have often ended in massive arrests, detentions and torture of [SCNC] activists in some cases occasioning death" (21 Sept. 2007).

In 2006, an SCNC member reportedly died in prison; SCNC supporters alleged the death was due to torture (*PHW 2007* 2007, 203).

Information on SCNC membership cards could not be found among the

sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

### **The Southern Cameroons Youth League**

The Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) was formed in 1995 (SCYL n.d.a; Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008). According to the Sociologist at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the SCYL is a group that split from the SCNC: the SCYL disagreed with the SCNC's approach of promoting dialogue with the government of Cameroon and believed instead that the use of force was necessary (25 Feb. 2008). Nevertheless, the website of the SCYL states that the group has worked "hand in hand" with the SCNC, as well as with other organizations, in order to further their cause (n.d.a). However, the website notes that the SCYL is not the youth wing of the SCNC (SCYL n.d.a.).

The SCYL website indicates that the group has an "executive council," which includes the following individuals: Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga, National Chairman; Lucas Cho Ayaba, Secretary-General; Benedict Nwana Kuah, Strategic Commander; Fuachaleke Charles Taku, Technical and Legal Adviser; and Nkea Aleambong Emmanuel, Founding Member (SCYL n.d.b). Most of the leadership of the SCYL is located outside of Cameroon (ibid.; Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the Sociologist at the African Studies Centre in Leiden noted that Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga is living in the United States (US), apparently having been granted refugee status after fleeing from prison in Cameroon (ibid.). Corroborating information on this topic could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The SCYL website indicates that its membership cards are issued by the group's International Secretariat (SCYL n.d.a), located in the Netherlands (ibid. n.d.c). Membership cards are generally signed by the group's secretary general; however, the head of the International Secretariat also has the authority to sign the cards (ibid. n.d.a). The website states that SCYL is open to those who support the group's cause, regardless of nationality or race (ibid.). The SCYL claims to have a membership of approximately 700,000 people (ibid.).

Like the SCNC, many of the SCYL's activities are thought to be at the international level, including undertaking missions to the UN and channelling activities through the UNPO (Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008). The SCYL is particularly active in the US (Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008; see also SCYL n.d.c). The organization also has offices in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Finland and Tanzania (SCYL n.d.c).

On 3 April 2006, an article in *The Post* reported that the Cameroonian authorities had arrested close to 30 suspected members of the SCYL in the country's Southwest Province for allegedly recruiting volunteers into the Southern Cameroons Defence Force [also known as SOCADEF, the military wing of the SCYL (SCYL n.d.d)]. Information on whether charges were pressed against the individuals or whether they were released could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to the Sociologist, the SCYL has been quiet in recent years (25 Feb. 2008). He expressed the opinion that "[m]ost people are afraid to join the SCYL" (Sociologist 25 Feb. 2008).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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